

What Schools Can Be: Planning for Schools After the Pandemic

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Is the pandemic an opportunity for change?

- Since we know that disturbance is required for change and there is no doubt that disturbance is happening as we speak, the question is, *are we willing to use this opportunity to create the kind of educational system we want?* We have learned that if we are going to change a system, we as individuals first have to SEE what the system is producing, then we have to ENGAGE with others to design something different, and finally we have to ACT. - Hugh Vasquez, NEP

Can we make schools more responsive to student needs?

- How do we make our school, education, and child-development systems more individually responsive to the needs of our students? Why not construct a system that meets children where they are and gives them what they need inside and outside of school in order to be successful? Let's take this opportunity to end the "one size fits all" factory model of education. - Paul Reville, former MA Commissioner of Education.

The need for change

- Schools as we have known them are often characterized by...
 - Emphasis on control and compliance
 - Excessive reliance on pressure and fear of failure as motivators
 - School culture is often too impersonal, fragmented, and for some kids, punitive
 - Learning is too often characterized by covering material, not enough deep engagement, curiosity, stimulation

To advance equity, educators must find the balance between technical and adaptive work

- Technical work - A focus on managing the operations of the system, ensuring that procedures are working, and that employees and students are in compliance with policy.
- Adaptive work - A focus on the dynamic and complex nature of the work, its substance, meaning and purpose. Work guided by a long term vision, with medium and short term goals. An awareness that we are trying to achieve our goals in a constantly changing environment
 - Ron Hieftz - Leadership on the Line

Technical/logistical changes dominate conversations about how schools should re-open

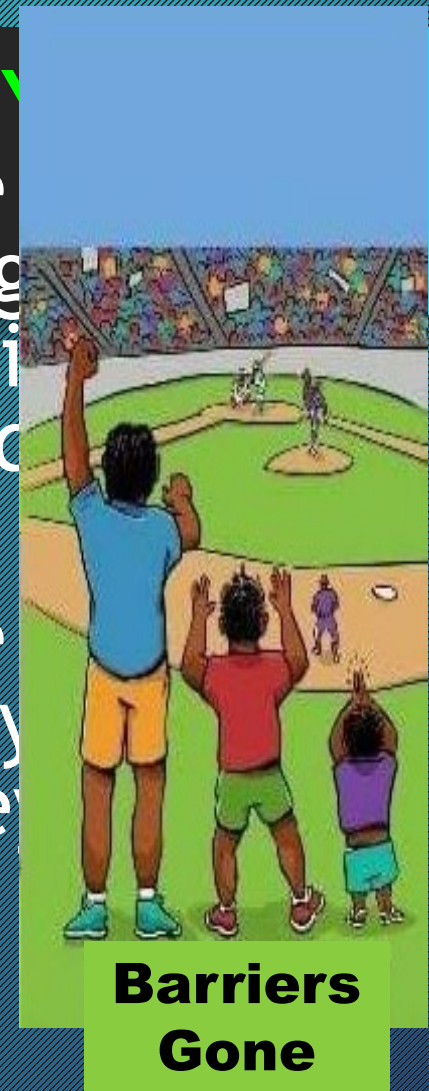
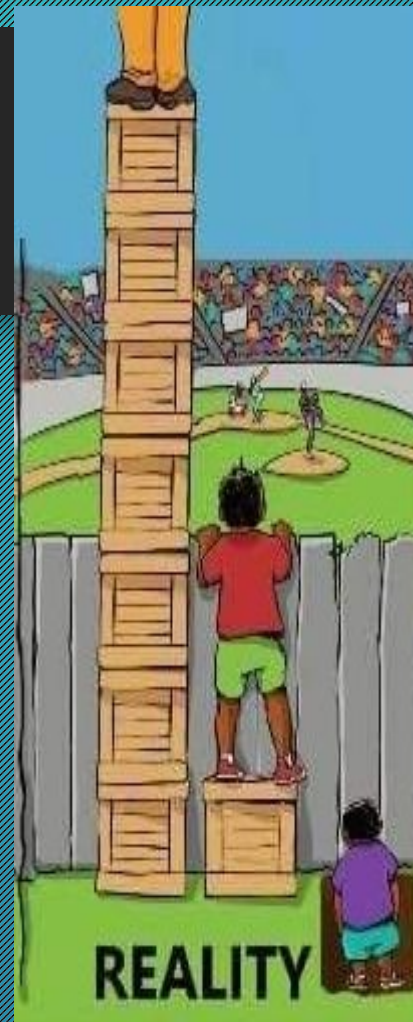
- How will we manage social distancing in schools that are already crowded?
- How will we keep schools clean and sanitary with a depleted classified staff?
- How will we deal with staff and students who have compromised immune systems?
- If we can't bring back all students which ones should we prioritize - Els, special needs, homeless, etc.?

Key Adaptive Questions After the Pandemic:

- ▶ How will your school/district support the mental health needs of students?
- ▶ How will we address lost learning, unmotivated students, frightened adults?
- ▶ Leaders will need to know how to support and motivate their staff and students.
- ▶ What will we need to know about the children?
 - ▶ How were they learning at home?
 - ▶ Where might there be gaps and losses in learning?
 - ▶ What will their social and emotional needs be?
 - ▶ How can we tap into or rekindle their dreams and aspirations?

Building Community First

- Start with all staff meetings: check in, listen to concerns/fears, help staff to feel comfortable about returning to work
- Spend the first few days with kids hearing their stories about life in quarantine. Do group activities to help kids become reacquainted with each other and with staff.
- Play games together, make it fun to be back. Sing, dance, enjoy each other.



The goal should be to eliminate barriers to learning for ALL students

Barriers to Equity After the Pandemic

- SEL needs - stress, anxiety and uncertainty
- Uneven access to distance learning - learning loss
- Lack of motivation, lethargy
- Difficulty adjusting to social distancing in school

Making the pursuit of equity central

- Equity is: Giving students what they need to be successful
 - *Acknowledging* and addressing differences in the needs of students.
 - *Responding* to academic, social and psychological needs that arise from the pandemic and inequality in society
 - *A commitment to fairness* in treatment – educational leaders must be the guardians and advocates for equity.
 - A willingness to *speak out* when injustice is evident and children are denied the opportunity to learn.

Equity is not:

- Lowering standards or expectations
- Making excuses due to poverty or race
- An issue that only affects schools serving poor children of color
- Choosing which students to serve – disadvantaged or affluent

What should our educational goals be after the pandemic?

- Learning should be meaningful, active and relevant
- Relationships should be central
- Whole child focus should be maintained
- Learning for adults and kids should be collaborative
- Learning should develop higher order thinking skills
- Learning should encourage the development of mastery

Capacity Building is Essential. It Can Advance Equity by...

- Serving as an ongoing *process* aimed at aligning the **skills of staff to the needs of students**
 - Tailored, *differentiated professional development*
 - Developing *strategic partnerships* to address social, emotional and mental health needs of students
- Utilizing *Collaborative problem solving* between schools and central office
- Building trust when providing necessary support to teachers and schools

Areas where capacity building will typically be needed

- Whole child focus: teachers often lack training in how to address non-academic needs (e.g. health, nutrition, SEL, etc.)
- Many teachers have never been trained in how to support students through distance learning
- Cultural competence among staff - in design of lessons and relationship building
- Teachers will need help in moving from a focus on student compliance to a focus on student empowerment.

Be careful with interventions

- We may want to accelerate learning opportunities for students who are behind academically through summer school but...
 - Supplemental learning should not be treated as punishment or remediation
 - Must be carried out by effective teachers
- Students with IEPs must receive support that is aligned with their needs
 - Academic support must be tailored to enhance learning
- Students will need to develop early intervention systems to identify and support struggling students

Useful Resources

- Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-19: Health and Safety Guidelines From Other Countries
- Leading Through Anxiety - HBS
- Pandemic Parenting - NY Times 4/19/20
- Stay Engaged During Coronavirus Quarantine
- Supporting Online Learning During the Pandemic
- A Q and A with a Homeschooling Expert from Ed Source - 4/16
- Mental Health Wellness Tips for Quarantine
- All are available on Facebook - Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D.

Questions

- What steps should your school/district need to take to prepare for the re-opening of school?
- Where will capacity building be needed?
- What strategies can you use to build community and help people to feel comfortable at school again?

Final thoughts from Paul Reville

- The best that can come of this is a new paradigm shift in terms of the way in which we look at education...children's well-being and success depend on more than just schooling. We need to look holistically, at the entirety of children's lives...they need a wide array of essential supports and opportunities outside of school. These education prerequisites go far beyond the purview of school systems, but rather are the responsibility of communities and society at large. In order to learn, children need equal access to health care, food, clean water, stable housing, and out-of-school enrichment opportunities... We have to reconceptualize the whole job of child development and education, and construct systems that meet children where they are and give them what they need, both inside and outside of school, in order for all of them to have a genuine opportunity to be successful. -

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/04/the-pandemics-impact-on-education/>